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# HOME CULT TRAIL



United States  
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PREPARED BY  
Forest  
Service

Mendocino  
National  
Forest

# NOME CULT TRAIL

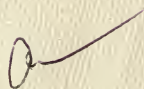
## *History of the 1863 Forced Relocation*

The removal of Indians from Chico to the Nome Cult Reservation in 1863 is one of many forced relocations following the establishment of reservations in northern California in the 1850s. Several different tribes were moved to the Nome Cult Reservation after it was established in Round Valley in 1856. "Nome Cult" comes from the Sacramento Valley Wintun's term *nome kechl* or "western tribe".

Most of those removed from Chico were Maidu from the northern Sacramento Valley and adjacent foothills, but members of other tribes were also relocated. In September 1863, 461 Indians were marched under guard from Chico to the Nome Cult Reservation, nearly 100 miles across the Sacramento Valley and rugged North Coast Ranges. Only 277 Indians completed the journey. Some were killed, a few escaped, and others were left behind, too sick to go on.

Although the path itself has disappeared, we now call this route the Nome Cult Trail. The most grueling part of the trail passed through what today is the Mendocino National Forest. Places where the Indians and their military escorts camped, and the locations of signs along the route, are shown on the accompanying map. While the Nome Cult Trail was a tragic chapter in our state's history, it is also a story about the resilience and strength of California Indians. It is an important legacy for their descendants and for all Californians.

*"My grandfather got caught ... at Cherokee. An army of people and miners came to round up and drive off all Indians...the soldiers came and took women, girls, boys, and everybody to a corral at Chico. There were about 400 to 500 Indians driven to Chico by soldiers on horseback."*



(Leland Scott)







1022375259

being forced to walk 100 miles across the hot Sacramento Valley and over steep mountains on your way to an alien land. You are still weak after drinking bad water nine days ago at Stony Creek. You can walk, but you are occasionally forced along by a soldier's bayonet. You feel you are one of the lucky ones: captured two weeks ago and held prisoner at Chico. Many of the other old people and children on this journey are not so fortunate.

Some had been

held in Chico for

nearly a year. Many

are exhausted and

frail from fever.

Courtesy of CSU Chico, Meritt Library, Special Collections



They, like you, are being forced to leave their homeland.

Despite sharing the journey, you cannot understand the languages or ways of most of these people. You can communicate with only three: they came from another Maidu village. One has the fever and probably will not survive the journey. Another vows to escape or to die in the attempt.

Today you will leave the camp at Mountain House to begin the most difficult part of the march. One hundred and fifty Indian people will be left behind to die or to regain their strength before being forced to continue on to the place the soldiers call Nome Cult Reservation. The soldiers seem to become more cruel the farther they get from Camp Bidwell. You think more and more about escaping.

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*"...soldiers came on horses and set the West people's [Maidu] roundhouses on fire. If anyone ran away, the soldiers shot him, and if he did not run away they probably shot him anyway...."*

Coyote Man

# I M A G I N E . . .

moving the Indians to the Nome Cult Reservation. It is late summer. The days are hot, with little relief at night. The trail is steep and difficult. You have had to repeatedly dismount to transport some of the old and ill Indians over the rugged terrain on your horse. You have been a soldier in the California Volunteers for six months, but this is not why you enlisted. You came to

not to  
on is  
to



Last summer back on your family's farm in Butte County people were angry as word of attacks by Indians became more frequent. Everyone talked about the murders of the Hickok and Lewis children. The Civil War has been in the East, and some of your neighbors sympathize with the Confederates. They think President Lincoln a man for emancipating the black slaves. In this climate of fear and distrust, all Indians are considered enemies. Those who protect them run the risk of retaliation.



of  
thirty days. The thirty days will  
expire on the 27th instant, and I  
respectfully request that I may be  
instructed how to proceed in the  
event of a collision".





**1849** Gold Rush spurs massive immigration and settlement of California. Native people forced off their lands; their numbers dwindle from killings and disease.



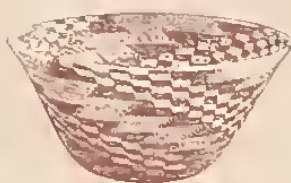
Butte County, 1862. Courtesy of CSU Chico. Meriam Library Special Collection

**1850** California passes "An Act for the Government and Protection of Indians," permitting the slavery of Indian children.

**1856** Nome Cult Farm established in Round Valley, Mendocino County. Two years later it becomes a reservation. Indian people from all over northern California are forcibly sent to Nome Cult Farm.

another wave of violent reaction against Indian people.

A "citizens' group" meets at Pence's Ranch to take action to end "Indian troubles" in Butte and Tehama counties. They adopt a resolution calling for removal of every Indian in the area to the reservation at Round Valley within 30 days. Those not surrendering will be killed.



**AUGUST:** Camp Bidwell established in Chico with five officers and 102 enlisted men. Lt. Colonel Ambrose E. Hooker assigned as commanding officer. 435 Indians captured in foothills and brought to Chico.



**SEPTEMBER:** Captain Starr of the California Volunteers commanded to serve as "escort to Indians en route to the Round Valley Reservation." 461 Indian people held at Camp Bidwell begin 100-mile journey to Nome Cult Reservation.

**1858** During the winter, more than 150 Indian people at Nome Cult Reservation are massacred by non-native settlers.

**1861** Civil War begins.

**1862** Nome Lackee Reservation in northern Sacramento Valley abandoned.

Soldiers establish a military post in Round Valley to protect Indians on the reservation from white settlers. The post is later named Camp Wright.

**1863 JUNE:** The much-publicized killing of three children from the Hickok family, by Indians seeking vengeance for Indian people killed by settlers, enrages Butte and Tehama county settlers.

Citizens of Chico petition Governor Leland Stanford for "men and means, and Army" to assist in "quelling these Indian outrages." Indian people from many northern California tribes brought to Chico and detained.

Five Indian men hanged at Helltown east of Chico on suspicion of "committing depredations upon property."

**JULY:** Two children from the Lewis family in Butte County killed by Indians incited by the Helltown hangings. These killings touch off

Capt. Douglass of Camp Wright reports: "...all the Indians that were sent or brought on the reservation from Chico about 10 days ago are in an almost dying condition through sickness and gross neglect....I was informed that nearly 200 sick Indians are scattered along the way for 40 miles...."

**OCTOBER:** Lt. Col. Hooker informs his superiors that "...a part of the route [to the Nome Cult Reservation is] over almost impassable mountain trails... [and] it became necessary for Capt. Starr's command to dismount and pack their horses over a great portion of the route with those who were either too old, too young, or too sick to march." Of the 150 left at Mountain House, "[t]his body will go to the reservation in small parties and join their tribe as fast as they are able to move.... The Indians now remaining in the [Sacramento] valley are all peaceable, quiet Indians, who are owned or employed by the farmers or rancheros on whose lands they live.... As to the mountain Indians in this vicinity, their number and character has been greatly exaggerated."



Lieutenant-Colonel Hooker,  
Sixth Infantry California Volunteers, Camp Bidwell, Cal.

Colonel: I have the honor to report... having left Chico... September 4, 1863, with 14 citizen wagons and 461 Indians, en route to Round Valley Reservation... having under my command 23 men and horses of Company F, Second Cavalry California Volunteers; also 1 Government wagon with 6 mules, traveling ten miles to Colby's Ferry, Sacramento River... Road good. Wood, water, and forage abundant.

September 5, crossed Sacramento River. Traveled ten miles in a westerly direction across a barren plain destitute of water to Stony Creek. The Indians suffered very much for want of water. At Stony Creek found plenty of water, but very brackish and disagreeable. Crossed Stony Creek and traveled up it five miles and encamped at Kirkpatrick's ranch...

September 6, left Kirkpatrick's ranch and traveled in a northwesterly course five miles, and crossed Stony Creek; then traveled in a westerly course seven miles to James' ranch... Water abundant on road.

September 7, left James' ranch, traveling a northerly course six miles to Lacock's ranch, on Thom's Creek... forage obtained from Mitchell's ranch, two miles below Lacock's, on Thom's Creek... The fourteen citizen wagons returned to Chico. Remained at this camp four days waiting for pack train from Round Valley and drying beef to subsist the Indians over the mountains.

September 12, left Lacock's ranch and traveled south of west three miles to Mountain House... No forage... Remained here until 14th. The pack train arrived 13th of September.

September 14, left Mountain House, leaving in camp 150 Indians not able to travel, leaving them four weeks' provisions. Traveled seven miles westerly up the mountains and encamped at Cedar Springs... Grass scarce. Road from

September 15, left Cedar Springs and traveled westerly six miles to Log Springs... Grass scarce. Road from Mountain House steep and difficult to travel with wagon.

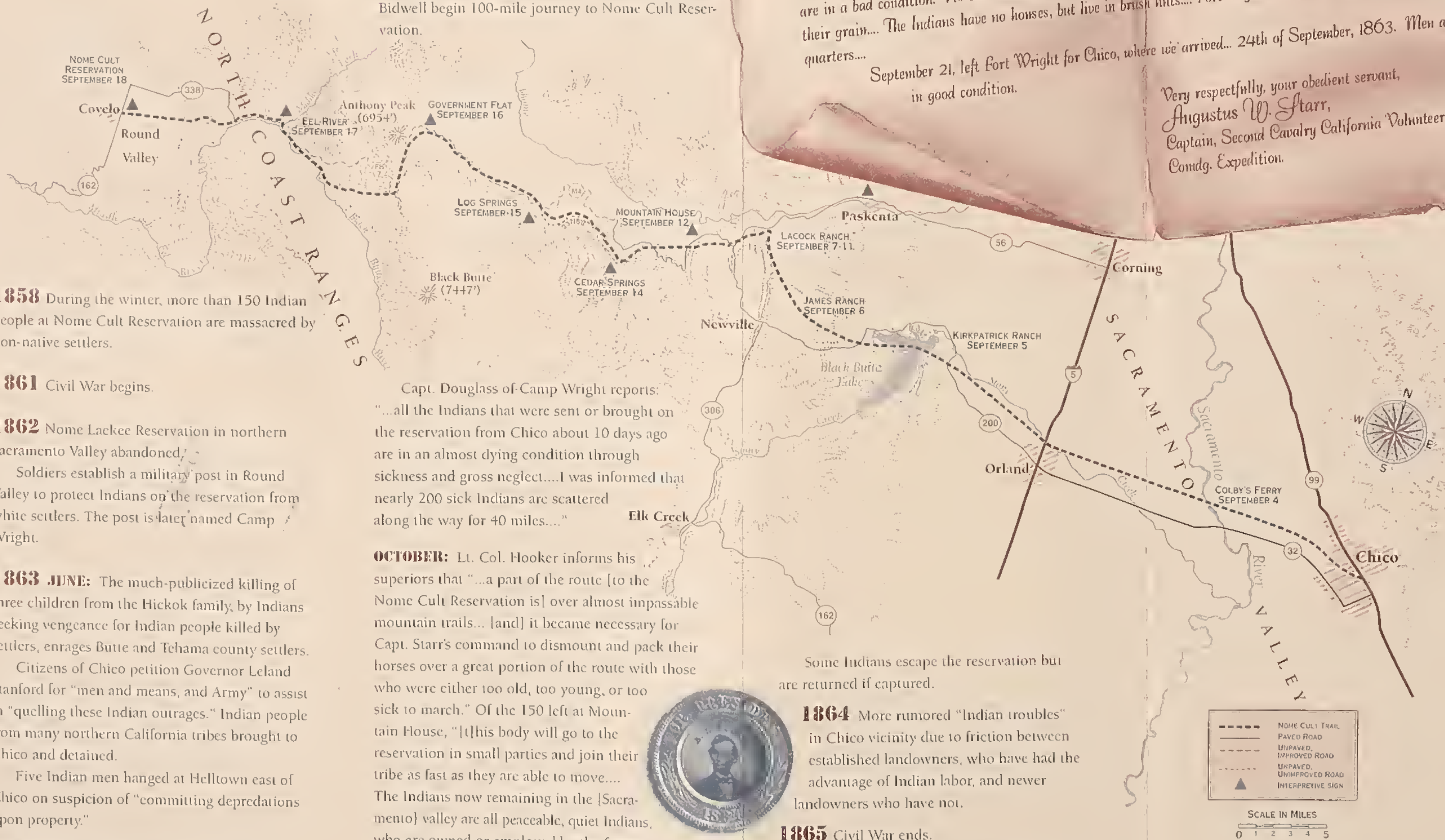
September 16, left Log Springs, wagon remaining in camp, and traveled westerly ten miles to Log Cabin... Wood, water, and grass abundant...

September 17, left Log Cabin and traveled westerly thirteen miles, and encamped between South and Middle Forks of Eel River. First three miles was ascending. Next ten miles was steep and descending. Some water about half-way down the mountain, north side of road...

September 18, left forks of Eel River and traveled eight miles in a westerly course to Indian reservation in Round Valley, where we arrived with 277 Indians, 32 dying en route and 2 escaping... Found at the reservation no more than sufficient food for the Indians now there to subsist them the coming winter... The affairs of the reservation are in a bad condition. No one knows the number of Indians on the reservation. They have no means of grinding their grain... The Indians have no horses, but live in brush huts... Fort in good condition. Men engaged in building quarters...

September 21, left Fort Wright for Chico, where we arrived... 24th of September, 1863. Men and horses in good condition.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
Augustus W. Starr,  
Captain, Second Cavalry California Volunteers,  
Comdg. Expedition.







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